

April 1988

THE SOCIALIST PARTY

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 84th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Held on 1st, 2nd and 3rd April 1988

At Chiswick Town Hall, London

<u>ATTENDANCES:</u>	<u>No. of Branches represented</u>	<u>No. of Delegates sitting</u>	<u>Branches not represented</u>
<u>Friday 1st</u>			
11.30 a.m.	16	32	Dundee, Enfield & Haringey, Lancaster, Merseyside, Newcastle, Seaham
2.45 p.m.	18	38	Dundee, Merseyside, Newcastle, Seaham
<u>Saturday 2nd</u>			
11.15 a.m.	17	30	Dundee, Eccles, Merseyside, Newcastle, Seaham
3.15 p.m.	18	37	Dundee, Merseyside, Newcastle, Seaham
<u>Sunday 3rd</u>			
10.15 a.m.	16	26	Birmingham, Dundee, Eccles, Merseyside, Newcastle, Seaham
3.10 p.m.	16	28	Dundee, Eccles, Guildford, Merseyside, Newcastle, Seaham

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FRIDAY, 1 APRIL

1. Election of Chair and Deputy Chair

Two nominations for the chair were proposed: P. Bennett and P. Wilson. P. Wilson was elected by 13 votes to 6 for P. Bennett. P. Bennett was elected deputy chair.

2. Permission for Delegates to sit

P. Hope (General Secretary) reported on behalf of the EC that 7 branches (Bournemouth, Glasgow, Guildford, Islington, Lancaster, Dundee and Merseyside) had sent in their Form C (report of numerical strength and financial condition) late, one (Birmingham) had sent only an incomplete report (no financial information) and two (Eccles and Seaham) had failed to send in any report.

It was agreed to permit delegates from branches that had submitted late reports to sit. The delegates from Birmingham and Eccles branches were allowed to sit after they had offered explanations and confirmed that they had been properly mandated.

E. Goodman (W. London) gave notice that her branch would be submitting an Instructed Resolution to 1989 Conference to refuse permission to sit to delegates from branches submitting late, incomplete or no Form C.

3. Order of Business

The Order of Business, as proposed by the Standing Orders Committee on the Final Agenda, was approved after slight modification.

4. Amendments to Rule

- (i) Islington Branch proposed that Rule 10 be amended from "Branches, Groups and members shall neither publish, sell or distribute any political literature in the name of the Party which has not been approved by the Executive Committee or the New Pamphlets Committee excepting handbills advertising meetings" to:

"Branches, Groups and members shall neither publish, sell or distribute any political literature, excepting handbills and leaflets, which has not been approved by the Executive Committee or the New Pamphlets Committee".

M. Chapman (Islington), opening, explained that the purpose of the amendment was to permit branches to publish urgent leaflets more quickly.

The amendment to Rule 10 was carried by 26-18.

A discussion followed on whether it was now necessary to vote on other amendments to the same Rule, proposed by Dundee Branch. It was agreed to vote on them. The various amendments (V2, V3 and V4 on the Final Agenda) were lost by, respectively, 15-23, 15-20 and 19-20.

- (ii) Islington Branch proposed that Rule 12 be amended to reduce the number of members of the EC from 12 to 10 and that Rule 13 be amended to reduce the quorum at EC meetings from 7 to 5.

C. Begley (Islington), opening, explained that the intention was to bring the Rule Book into line with the present situation and avoid repeated by-elections to try to fill unoccupied EC seats.

T. Dohson (Camden) presented his branch's Item for Discussion on "The possibility of holding fortnightly EC meetings". He suggested that, to attract more members to stand, the EC should consider meeting fortnightly on a weekend rather than weekly on the evening of a working day as at present which was inconvenient for many members.

K. Knight (NW London): the problem of lack of candidates for the EC was not due to there being too many seats on the EC, but to the situation in the Party which led certain members not to put their names forward.

R. Cook (Birmingham): EC membership had become less attractive for some because the EC work had, thankfully, become the mundane, routine job of administration rather than squabbling.

The amendment to Rule 12 was carried by 34-13.

The amendment to Rule 13 was carried by 35-13.

- (iii) Swansea Branch proposed that Rule 27 be amended from "candidates for political office shall have passed an examination set by the Executive Committee" to:

"Candidates for political office shall have passed the Party's Speakers Test".

H. Moss(Swansea), opening, said the branch saw no reason why candidates should be required to pass a more advanced test than the one to speak on behalf of the Party; the extra, Candidates Test was superfluous.

J. Howell(Guildford): as candidates would have a higher profile than speakers there was some logic in requiring them to be more informed.

D. Donnelly(Glasgow) pointed out that in any event the two tests were almost identical.

S. Coleman (Islington): mere knowledge was not all that was required of a Party candidate.

C. McColl(Bournemouth) called for more training and education both for speakers and potential candidates.

The amendment to Rule 27 was carried by 33-13.

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P. Bennett(Manchester) and R. Best(Lancaster) moved a Floor Resolution:

"This Conference recommends that when new rulebooks are issued in 1990 they be reprinted with the rules as they stand at the time given in full in the body of the rulebook, i.e. without changes being shown on a separate amendment slip".

P. Bennett(Manchester): an up-to-date rulebook had last been issued in 1982 and the number of amendment slips was now beginning to become confusing.

H. McLaughlin(Bolton): the amendment slips should show the new Rule, as amended, in full and not simply the amendments to the old Rule.

P. Hope(General Secretary) informed Conference that there was a stock of about 1000 rulebooks at Head Office.

J. Howell(Guildford) pointed out that with the new office equipment the Party had just acquired it would be possible to put the whole rulebook on disc and run off a complete, updated version, incorporating any changes, after every Conference.

The Floor Resolution was carried by 13-2.

5. Resolutions

(1) Resolution 1a(Islington):

"This Conference regrets the fact that Conference 1987 saw fit to completely reject the principle contained in the proposed amendment to Rule 12 submitted by Hammersmith Branch.

On grounds of efficiency and greater representation, Conference strongly favours re-organising the Party's administration on a two-tier basis, and resolves that this shall be done within the following general structure:

1. A General Purposes Committee, consisting of the General Secretary and Treasurer, plus four other members elected on a party-wide basis, which shall meet weekly or fortnightly, and shall deal with urgent matters, limited expenditure, etc.,
2. An Executive Committee consisting of twelve or more members elected on an area basis, and meeting say monthly or bi-monthly, possibly at different venues around the country. As well as any other delegated function, such an EC would have the main responsibility for implementing Conference and Party Poll decisions, would oversee the work of the General Purposes Committee, and would have a definite role to play in the process of working out Party strategy.
3. As for the details, Conference instructs the present EC to refer the matter to an appropriate subcommittee, which shall present their report for discussion at ADM 1988.

ratification by Conference 1988

Finally, Conference calls attention to 1987 Conference Resolution (Area Organisation) and to Islington Branch's Circular "Why the Party Needs to Plan Strategically (ADM 1987)".

17 amendments, including 13 in the name of Enfield and Haringey Branch, had been submitted to this resolution (see Final Agenda).

H. McLaughlin (Bolton) and P. Bennett (Manchester) moved the following procedural resolution which was accepted unanimously:

"Delegates will record their votes on a specially provided form and hand these to the Tellers for counting while other business takes place. After the count has been completed, the result can be given to the delegates, who can then deal with the resolution or substantive resolution"

R. Critchfield and K. Powell were elected Tellers for this purpose. M. Chapman (Islington), opening on the resolution, said the aim was twofold: to overcome the problem of the quorum at EC meetings and to organise the EC on an area basis so as to make it more representative. J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey), opening on the branch's amendments, said that the resolution was a complex one, hence the number of amendments; these were not trivial but a response to the complexity of the resolution itself.

D. Donnelly (Glasgow): Enfield and Haringey's amendments were quite unnecessary as the resolution called for a subcommittee to examine such details. On the substance of the resolution, he said that Glasgow Branch was against both the proposed two-tier system and the election of the EC on an area basis meeting in different parts of the country. A mobile EC would involve a waste of Party funds, especially as the EC was now playing the purely administrative role it should rather than getting involved in Party controversies as previously.

S. Easton (EC Member) said the EC now had to get through an immense amount of work in a small amount of time. The separation of the work performed by the present EC into administrative (finance, titles of debates, etc) and political (implementing Conference decisions, discussing strategy, etc) would overcome this problem. As many members as possible should be involved in this latter and this could be done by electing the proposed first tier on an Area basis; members from different parts of the country did have different susceptibilities.

P. Lawrence (SW London) said his branch was against the proposal. There would be problems straightaway, particularly over who decided what question was administrative and what political. The matters which it was proposed a General Purposes Committee should deal with took up very little EC time and it was absurd to imagine that the other matters now dealt with by the EC could be properly dealt with by a body meeting only once every one or two months.

D. Chesham (EC Member): the proposal would introduce an unnecessary bureaucratic layer into the Party's administration. The reason why the presently-constituted EC could not always get through all its business in proper time was not the workload but the fact that some EC members talked too much. If non-London members felt left out by the present system, they would have complained, but they hadn't.

All the proposed amendments were lost (V8 by 4-25, V9 by 8-24, V10 by 4-24, V11 by 2-25, V12 by 8-25, V13 by 6-21, V14 by 12-27, V15 by 12-29, V16 by 12-29, V17 by 16-19, V18 by 2-29, V19 by 2-27, V20 by 2-29, V21 by 4-33, V22 by 2-27, V23 by 4-31 and V24 by 2-27).

Resolution 1a was carried, unamended, by 28-19.

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P. Bennett (Manchester) and A. McLellan (Manchester) moved that:

"This Conference urges branches not to move too many trivial amendments to Conference resolutions, as this is time-wasting and unhelpful".

H. Edwards (W. London) and H. Moss (Swansea) moved an amendment to delete the words "too many".

This amendment was carried by 17-1 and the Floor Resolution, so amended, by 32-2.

H. Moss (Swansea) and J. Morgan (Swansea) moved that:

"This Conference considers that Enfield and Haringey Branch has acted irresponsibly in cluttering up the Conference agenda with multiple amendments".

K. Knight (NW London) said that, although he agreed the amendments were trivial, it would be a dangerous precedent that would be bad for Party democracy if Conference were to try to gag branches by preventing them from proposing amendments that they considered important.

S. Coleman (Islington): It was a lack of restraint by branches in this matter that presented a danger to Party democracy. A line did have to be drawn somewhere, otherwise there would be no alternative but to resort to compositing resolutions as a trade union conferences with all the dangers this involved.

H. Moss (Swansea): this sort of thing discouraged attendance at Conference.

C. McColl (Bournemouth): branches and Conference had a limited amount of time. Enfield and Haringey had been irresponsible in not taking this into account and Conference should register this.

J. Howell (Guildford): there must be no gagging. Multiple amendments must be discouraged, but could not and should not be banned. Branches must be asked to be responsible and exercise self-restraint.

G. Woods (Central Branch Secretary): voting returns from Central Branch members had been down by a third this year, perhaps because they had been asked to vote 109 times.

The Floor Resolution was carried by 29-2.

(ii) Resolution 1b (Islington):

"This Conference approves the ideas re the need for a national Party strategy, as outlined in the Islington Branch circular distributed before the 1987 ADM, and instructs the EC to set in motion the procedures, including the re-design of Conference, to ensure that such a strategy can be formulated annually in the manner outlined".

Amendment proposed by Enfield and Haringey: "delete 'including the re-design of Conference'".

S. Coleman (Islington), opening on the resolution, said that at the moment the Party just drifted from year to year without any mechanism for judging the success or failure of the forms of activity it engaged in. The Party would survive even without planning, but to grow it needed a plan. This would involve setting targets and priorities and deciding what not to do as well as deciding what to concentrate on. These should be put before Conference each year by the EC and its subcommittees and the results analysed at the following year's Conference. Islington also envisaged an annual analysis of the political situation, which did change under capitalism; this year, for instance, Conference could have discussed the implications, for the growth of the Party, of the election of a third Thatcher government last year.

R. Cook (Birmingham) said his branch was lukewarm about the idea. For it to work would require total democracy in the Party in the sense of all branches accepting the priorities laid down by Conference, yet experience had shown that Conference had taken decisions -- to contest a seat in a general election, for instance -- which some branches had not applied by not supporting the election campaign.

G. Slapper (Islington): if this resolution was carried, the EC would be being instructed to restructure Conference by devising mechanisms for allowing priorities to be established, but this could not apply till next year, so what would happen in the meantime? How would, and could, the suggestions of the existing Ad Hoc Committee on Strategy and Planning be put into operation before next year?

D. Donnelly(Glasgow): the Party held that everybody was in principle capable of becoming a socialist, but in practice we did target people and, in his opinion, not always well. We aimed too high, at readers of the Guardian rather than the worker in the street.

L. Cox (Standing Orders Committee) suggested that Conferences could alternative between a business/rules revision conference one year and a strategy/policy-making Conference the next.

S. Easton (EC Member): there were groups we ought to be targetting, for instance women and young people.

K. Knight (NW London): the idea was alright, but somewhat airy-fairy as there was no mention of the sort of targets and priorities that were envisaged.

C. McColl(Bournemouth): one such priority might be contesting elections.

J. Percy-Smith(Yorks): her branch was in favour; members would be more motivated if their activities were directed towards specific goals.

E. Goodman(W London, member of the Ad Hoc Committee) said that only one branch had responded to the Committee's request for suggestions, and even some of the important subcommittees had not submitted evidence. More cooperation from members would be required if the idea was to be made to work.

G. Marcelo(Bristol) said his branch was in favour of the motion, but in the event of its implementation the EC's report should be received by branches before the Conference agenda was drawn up; perhaps the year under consideration by Conference should run from September to September, instead of December to December as now.

Enfield and Haringey's proposed amendment was lost by 4-36.

Resolution 1b was carried, unamended, by 33-8.

(iii) Resolution 2a (SW London):

"This Conference resolves that the New Pamphlets Committee should issue pamphlets and leaflets on subjects which have been approved by the EC; quantities and expenditures to be agreed by the EC; and subject to any draft pamphlet being submitted to the EC six weeks before the text is sent for printing".

Proposed amendments:

"Between 'EC' and 'quantities', insert the words 'or by Conference Resolution;' (NW London).

"Delete 'six weeks before the text is sent for printing' and substitute 'for approval'" (Enfield and Haringey).

"Add at the end "so that EC members have the opportunity of submitting individually to the New Pamphlets Committee suggested amendments or additions to the text"(W.London).

P. Lawrence(SW London), opening on the resolution, said that some years ago the Party had taken a decision to place the production of pamphlets entirely in the hands of the New Pamphlets Committee. His branch was totally against this and would never be reconciled to it. It was undemocratic to place such power over what we published in the hands of only three members; it also demeaned the value of the pamphlets they produced since it meant they represented the views of those three members and nothing more.

J. Bradley(Enfield and Haringey) said the old system should be brought back as 14 --or 12 or whatever-- heads were always better than 3.

K. Knight(NW London) said his branch too agreed with SW London. You could correct errors in the Socialist Standard but not in a pamphlet. This was why it was important that more than three members should go through the text before publication.

D. Donnelly(Glasgow) criticised those who kept on trying to re-open this issue and defended the present position which had been instituted because the previous system of editing by the entire EC including dots and commas had proved to be too time-consuming, diverting the EC from its other activities.

J. Percy-Smith (Yorks, member of the NPC) pointed out that the New Pamphlets Committee was a properly-constituted subcommittee of the EC, not just three individual members. It was just not true that three members decided on their own about pamphlets. The subject for pamphlets was suggested by the EC or branches or by Conference decision. Generally speaking, it was not NPC members who wrote the pamphlets; their role was to edit texts drafted by other members. When this had been done, the edited draft was sent to EC members for their individual comments, as W. London wanted to formalise with their amendment. If the EC as a whole were then to go through the pamphlet editing it again, this would be a wasteful duplication of effort.

H. Young (NW London): it was the EC that must edit Party pamphlets, especially as one member of the NPC didn't understand the Party case...

The Chair called H. Young to order in accordance with the 1987 Conference resolution calling on members not to impugn the socialist credentials of other members.

H. Young withdrew his remark and went on to say that EC meetings, unlike NPC meetings, were public. There was also the legal aspect: who was legally responsible for their contents, the EC or the NPC? S. Easton (EC Member): EC members should not just be asked to comment on drafts as individuals, but should do so as a body.

P. Lawrence (SW London), winding up, said that whatever the result of the vote his branch would go on fighting to change the present position.

W. London's proposed amendment was lost by 10-31.

Enfield and Haringey's proposed amendment was lost by 8-34.

The NW London amendment was carried by 21-19.

Resolution 2a, as amended, was lost by 17-26.

(iv) Resolution 2b (SW London):

"In view of the floor resolution moved by Guildford Branch and carried at ADM 1987 recommending the EC to authorise the Print Committee to purchase new printing equipment, and in view of the proposal contained in Guildford Branch's Circular 'The Road to Socialism', paragraph 49, page 9, that the Party set up '...a publishing co-operative, to which the Party could lease facilities on agreed terms...', this Conference states that it is not the role of the Party to be a printing business and that in no circumstances should its premises be used to house a printing co-operative".

Proposed addendum: "Add at the end 'or any part of any co-operative'" (Enfield and Haringey).

P. Lawrence (SW London), opening on the resolution, said it had nothing to do with printing equipment, nor even with the merits of the Guildford circular. It was about the proposal to set up a publishing cooperative. This should be scotched as soon as possible as there could be no question of the Party being or housing a printing business.

H. Cottis (E London) presented his branch's Item for Discussion on "The need for a Party Poll to decide on the EC's proposals for purchasing new printing machinery capable of producing the SS and, as a consequence, taking over virtually the whole of the ground floor of Head Office". His branch felt that Head Office should be used for socialist propaganda meetings not as a printing works.

R. Cook (Birmingham) described the SW London resolution as a red herring as the real issue was whether or not the Party should print its own literature, nor whether or not it should establish a printing cooperative.

J. Coxall (Islington) and C. Slapper (Islington) gave notice that they would move the following Floor Resolution after the vote on the Instructed Resolution:

"This Conference recommends the EC to proceed with the acquisition of printing facilities suitable for the eventual production of the Socialist Standard, but on the following

conditions:

1. The EC should carefully assess the number of members able and willing to make the necessary commitment to maintaining the production of the SS, and that the timing of any purchases should be closely related to such an assessment;
2. Close attention should be paid to the recent document on the subject from the World Socialist Party(Ireland) Print Committee and other technical advice on the possibility of computer-based or laser printing systems, which may be most economical".

C. McColl(Bournemouth) and P. Beebee(Bournemouth) gave notice that they would move the following Floor Resolution:

"That the EC be instructed to proceed immediately with the purchase of adequate printing equipment to produce the SS, up to a maximum of £15000, and that we should welcome the offer of members who print the Socialist View for the WSP(I) to cooperate with the print committee in making the final choice of equipment".

K. Knight(NW London) said that he had been on a committee which had recommended in 1970 the acquisition of printing equipment, but standards had to be maintained. The SS should not have the appearance of the Irish Party's Socialist View. It was also essential to have a team of members prepared to work on its production month after month, but there was as yet no evidence that such a squad existed.

J. Coxall(Islington) said her branch was opposed to the SW London resolution as it spread confusion by linking two completely unrelated issues so that, if it was passed, this could be interpreted as a vote against the Party printing its own literature. Islington Branch was also against a Party Poll on the acquisition of printing equipment as it was clear that this would merely confirm the majority opinion, as expressed in the recommendation voted at the 1987 ADM. The time had now come to mandate the EC to buy the equipment. Some members had legitimate fears but these had been answered in detail in the very helpful report from the WSP of Ireland's Print Committee.

V. Vanni (Glasgow): the Party's Print Committee had given good financial reasons as to why the commercial printing of the Standard by an outside firm could not continue: a deficit between costs and sales receipts of £10,000 a year. The problem had never been one of space for printing equipment, but of whether or not we had the manpower to operate it.

J. Percy-Smith(Yorks) asked if the printing equipment the Print Committee was recommending would be capable of producing enough and to a high enough quality, eg a glossy cover, as would be required if we wanted to get the Standard distributed commercially.

D. Donnelly(Glasgow) said his branch supported the SW London resolution. There could be no question of the Party setting up a cooperative printing business, but we did have to get into printing our own literature. He was against commercial distribution to the cognoscenti; what was needed was a propaganda journal for sale in streets and pubs.

D. Chesham (EC Member): the problem was urgent; unless someone died leaving us money (which we couldn't count on), the Party would be skint by the end of the year. We ought to spend the last legacy, £16,000 from the sale of the house in Derby, on acquiring printing equipment to do the Standard before it was frittered away in paying a commercial printer. As to the problem of manpower the editorial committee continued to function month after month even though some of its members dropped out from time to time, so why should a printing committee be any different? In any event, the proposal wasn't to completely produce the Standard straightaway but only by stages beginning with, say, typesetting or the folding, stapling and trimming.

J. Howell (Guildford, member of the Print Committee): Guildford had no plans for starting a publishing cooperative; this had just been an idea not a definite proposal. On the other issue of acquiring printing equipment, he said that unless a decision to do so was taken now, there was not going to be any SS at all next year. We couldn't just wait till the money ran out and then decide, but must start preparing now since the Print Committee wouldn't be able to produce the Standard without some months of preparation and training. Answering the technical questions, he said that a glossy cover could be produced if need be and estimated that the cost of producing 3000 copies would be between £400-£600, so saving £800 a month, though this didn't include a depreciation fund, lights, rates, etc.

The Enfield and Haringey amendment was carried by 28-11.

Resolution 2b, as so amended, was carried by 29-16.

The Floor Resolution in the name of J. Coxall and C. Slapper was carried by 24-4.

The Floor Resolution in the name of C. McColl and P. Beebee was withdrawn.

SATURDAY, 2 APRIL

(v) Resolution 3a (Islington):

"This Conference favours participation in the next General Election and will prepare to contest at least one constituency".

Resolution 3b (Islington):

"This Conference instructs the EC to take serious steps to ensure that at least one London Branch and at least one non-London Branch commences preparation by the beginning of 1989 with a view to being in a position to contest the next General Election".

Resolution 3c (Swansea):

"This Conference recognises that the current physical and financial resources of the Party are insufficient for us to effectively contest national elections. This Conference notes, however, that the contesting of local elections, whilst not making severe demands on our current resources, provides us with the electioneering experience and organisational framework necessary to effectively contest at national level. Therefore Conference strongly recommends Branches, as a matter of urgency, to concentrate their efforts towards contesting local elections, until such time when the Party's resources are in an improved position to stand in national elections".

Proposed addendum to Resolutions 3b and 3c: "Add at the end 'and that these preparations include plans to make contact, after the election, with those voters who voted for the SPGB; and that the results of such contacts be included in the Branches' Election Reports'". (Guildford)

C. Slapper (Islington), opening on resolution 3a and 3b, said it was a matter of socialist principle to contest elections. This showed both that we stood for democratic action to establish socialism and that we were politically active. Swansea claimed we were not yet able to "effectively contest national elections". Islington denied this, as the branch's participation in the last general election had been effective. Islington were against the Swansea resolution as this would mean that the branch would have to climb down from the national to the local level. The Guildford addendum forgot that the success of an election campaign couldn't be judged solely by the number of votes obtained, but there was also the aspect of spreading socialist ideas and getting better known. H. Moss (Swansea), opening on resolution 3c, said that the objection to contesting parliamentary elections at this stage was purely on practical grounds: parliamentary constituencies were

was large to be covered by the relatively small number of members we had and cost up to \$3000 whereas a local election campaign would be run on a budget of a maximum of \$200. The Swansea use of the word "effective" was not meant to suggest that the Islington branch's campaign in the last election had not been effective, but merely that conditions surrounding parliamentary elections (national campaigns, television coverage) meant that our candidate could not compete on equal terms, whereas they could in local elections as these were still based on canvassing and local press coverage. In any event, the Swansea resolution did not rule out branches contesting national elections as it only "strongly recommended" rather than instructed them to concentrate on local elections.

J. Howell (Guildford), speaking to his branch addendum to both resolutions, said that we could only judge the success of an election campaign by numerical standards, not enthusiastic guestimates. We should only contest elections when we could expect to get about 1000 votes, otherwise we merely demonstrated our weakness and so discouraged people from seeing us as a realistic alternative.

J. D'Arcy (Camden): there had always been two points of view in the Party on this issue. There were those, like the late comrade Lake, who argued that as the only aim the Party could have in contesting elections was to capture the political machinery we should abstain from electoral action until asked to put forward a candidate by workers in a particular constituency. And there were those who saw the electoral process as part of the general process of propaganda and urged participation for publicity and propaganda purposes. This latter view had prevailed, but the results had proved disappointing. We must now face reality; the experiment had failed, but the Party was still being pushed into contesting elections as an act of faith by zealots who took no account of the fact that the derisory number of votes we obtained was proving counter-productive in propaganda terms.

H. Young (NW London): the time was not ripe and the moment was not propitious for the Party to contest elections. In doing so we merely banged our heads against a wall of working class apathy. The results obtained --less than the Raving Lunatic Party-- merely allowed our opponents to gloat. Lake was right: contesting elections at the present stage was not worth the time and money; we were merely deluding ourselves and should stop making ourselves look ridiculous. We should not contest elections until we can get 1000-2000 votes.

R. Cook (Birmingham): was the fact that elections had become TV chat shows a reason for abandoning political action?

D. Donnelly (Glasgow): comrade Young's argument was an argument for not doing anything, not holding meetings, not producing the Standard as well as not contesting elections. We should not discourage enthusiastic branches from contesting elections, national and local. It was certainly better than tired, fed-up members sitting at home and sneering at the electoral show on TV.

K. Graham (Bristol) asked if Islington were prepared to contest local elections.

J. Howell (Guildford), winding up on the addenda, said that he was not advocating giving up electoral activity in favour of inactivity, but in favour of some other more effective form of activity.

C. Slapper (Islington), winding up, said that zeal was better than defeatism. Conditions would not change unless we worked to change them. He confirmed that Islington would participate in local elections.

Resolution 3a was carried by 28-7

Resolution 3b was carried by 25-19

Guildford's proposed addendum to resolution 3b was lost by 11-27.

Resolution 3c was carried by 24-18

Guildford's proposed addendum to resolution 3c was lost by 10-25.

H. Moss (Swansea) requested urgency to propose a Floor Resolution relevant to the local elections Swansea Branch was contesting in May. He and J. Howell (Guildford) moved:

"The view of this Conference is that branches contesting elections should be able to make their own decision as to whether or not a photograph of the candidate appears on the election manifesto".

H. Moss (Swansea) said that the branch had voted by 6-1 to put the candidate's photo on the manifesto. When this came before the EC a majority had expressed severe reservations, but had not told the branch not to go ahead. It was against past Party practice, but there were good reasons for doing so. It would indicate that the manifesto was not issued by an anonymous party machine but by ordinary people. And it was a well-known fact that an accompanying photo helped get people to read articles; the same applied to election manifestos. In any event, the Party had long supplied photos of our candidates to the press.

P. Hope (General Secretary): there was no past Party ruling on the matter; the only ruling on photos concerned those for the press. The EC felt that photos of the candidate should not appear on our election material, but took the view that it was not up to it to rule on the issue; this was a decision to be taken by Conference.

C. Slapper (Islington): Swansea should wait till Conference could decide by Instructed Resolution next year. A photo on the manifesto would not enhance the credibility of the Party case, but it would undermine our claim to be contesting elections on a different basis from all other parties.

B. Johnson (Swansea) said he had been the one dissenting vote in the branch. He felt the inclusion of a photo turned the manifesto from a political statement into a personal appeal from the candidate.

H. Moss (Swansea), replying to the debate, said there was no question of turning the manifesto into a personal appeal. In fact the title would be "Vote for Yourself for a Real Change". The suggestion was not that a photo would enhance the credibility of the Party's ideas, but that it would get more people to read the manifesto.

The Floor Resolution was carried by 16-11

(vi) Resolution 4 (Lancaster):

"This Conference resolves that:

1. The EC appoint an Information Committee to draw up a combined speakers/skills/collators index organised by subject, to be sent to Branches.
2. The EC immediately issue a request for volunteers to begin collation-work, on the basis of personal interest.
3. That volunteers be directed, where there is no preference, towards less well-represented subjects, and that the Information Committee retains for this purpose a running file of all collation-work"

Proposed amendment: "In Clause 3 delete 'retains for this purpose a running file of all collation-work' and substitute 'and Head Office shall retain for this purpose running files of all collation work'" (Enfield and Haringey).

R. Best (Lancaster), opening, said information from such a Committee would help branches run local meetings with local speakers.

J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey), on the proposed amendment, said it was important that all records be kept at Head Office as they would be lost if some member dropped out and didn't return documents in their possession.

In the ensuing discussion, delegates felt that, although the idea had been tried before (Speakers Notes, Databank, etc) and had fizzled out every time, this was not a reason for not trying again.

Enfield and Haringey's proposed amendment was lost by 14-30.
Resolution 4 was carried by 37-10.

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Bennett (Manchester) presented his branch's Item for Discussion on "The Advantages in Establishing a library of videos for use at meetings".

S. Cook (Birmingham) said there could be a problem of copyright.

H. Harwood (Guildford) said that, normally, if videos were used for educational purposes, as was the case here, there should be no such problem.

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C. Slapper (Islington) presented his branch's Item for Discussion on "How can we be more positive and forceful in recruiting new members at public meetings?" Visitors should not be pestered at meetings, but they should not be ignored either: they should be talked to informally.

G. Marcelo (Bristol): the question of how to join was probably better raised by a handout than as a direct question.

J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey) said his branch did have a series of handouts on how to join, how to help, etc which they had been using for some years.

C. McColl (Bournemouth): it was important at meetings that members should not queue up, as they sometimes did, to grind into the ground some visitor who had expressed some criticism of us.

J. Coxall (Islington): we should be careful about encouraging people to apply for membership before they were ready. Nothing was worse than having to reject an applicant.

(vii) Resolution 5 (Islington)

"This Conference resolves that the Party's full name, 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain', be used in the following cases:

(a) Legal documents, Forms A to G, membership cards.

(b) The World Socialist Movement listing box, The World Socialist Movement publications box, the 'Address of the Party' box on the inside page of the Socialist Standard giving details of EC Meetings, etc.

'The Socialist Party' to be used in the following cases:

(1) On the covers of the SS and pamphlets.

(2) Generally in the texts of articles and pamphlets.

(3) On all occasions where the address of Head Office is given, e.g. headed notepaper, adverts for socialist material, etc, except in (b) above.

(4) All advertising and publicity material, posters, media adverts, etc.

(5) In the titles of meetings and debates, and as the organiser of them.

(6) Generally by speakers at indoor and outdoor meetings.

(7) Manifestoes, election addresses, etc".

Branches had proposed 10 amendments to this resolution. It was unanimously agreed by a show of hands to follow the same procedure as over the multiple amendments to resolution 1a above.

C. Begley (Islington), opening on the resolution, said that the aim was to get consistency on the issue once and for all. Previous guidelines had been ignored by some branches, sometimes by ignorance, sometimes deliberately. Reference to "Great Britain" had a nationalist undertone which was doing us harm. It should therefore be used only on legal documents and to distinguish us from the Socialist Party of Canada, the Socialist Party of New Zealand, etc. Islington's amendments to their own resolution were to extend the use of 'The Socialist Party' to leaflets (V 45) and to the Head Office shopfront (V 41).

L. Howlett (Camden), explaining his branch's amendments, said that 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain' and 'The Socialist Party' had always been interchangeable terms. Camden wanted to maintain this. The resolution was an attempt to change the Party's name without formally doing so.

G. Docherty (W. London) presented his branch's Item for Discussion on "Party advertisements in The Guardian". The branch had no objections to the advertisements themselves but felt that at present there was a lack of coordination, with different branches using different terms to describe the Party.

J. Percy-Smith (Yorks) presented her branch's Item for Discussion on "Should the use of the Party's abbreviated title, SPGB, be retained at the discretion of speakers, writers, etc?" The branch felt that it should. 'SPGB' was in political use and we should take advantage of this.

H. Cottis (E London) presented his branch's Item for Discussion on "The 1986 Party Poll on changing the Party's name". This Poll had rejected by 229-72 the idea of changing the Party's name. The Islington resolution was a way of trying to get round this.

U. Young (NW London) could see no advantage in the proposed usage; it wouldn't make any difference at all. The Socialist Party of Great Britain was our name and speakers should insist on the "Great Britain" part as it was this that showed we were organised to capture political power in the political area called Great Britain.

J. D'Arcy (Camden) agreed with comrade Young that to drop "of Great Britain" would be to renounce our aim of capturing political power here. It would mean that we were no longer a party but just an address. "Of Great Britain" had no nationalist overtones but merely indicated that we were operating in Great Britain. The Party's name was "The Socialist Party of Great Britain", but Camden Branch had been told by the EC they couldn't use it. Camden branch was the Camden Branch of The Socialist Party of Great Britain, would it be action detrimental for them to continue calling themselves this?

C. McColl (Bournemouth): the 1986 Party Poll had not rejected changing the Party's name, but only the particular change of name --to World Socialist Party-- that had been proposed. Whatever people said, "of Great Britain" was offputting.

R. Cook (Birmingham): Camden must abide by the majority decision reached at this Conference whatever it turned out to be.

C. Slapper (Islington): if the resolution was carried, branches would no longer be able to continue using 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain' and 'The Socialist Party' interchangeably. If they did, they could indeed be charged with action detrimental for not respecting a democratically-arrived at Conference decision. The resolution did not seek to change the Party's name but merely instructed branches to abbreviate it under certain circumstances.

L. Cox (EC Member): comrade D'Arcy had said that if we drop the "of Great Britain" this would mean renouncing our political objective of the capture of political power in Great Britain. That was a silly argument. What we called ourselves was a habit and had nothing to do with our commitment to political action. To insist on the appendage "of Great Britain" on all occasions was to make a fetish of it whereas we ought to rationally consider what was best for getting our ideas across.

P. Deutz (EC Member) insisted that the 1986 Party Poll had been a decision not to change the Party's name and should have settled the question for some years. Our initials 'SPGB' were well established --other organisations took years to get their initials established and could envy us here-- so why abandon them?

All the proposed amendments except V41 and V45 were lost (V42 by 9-36, V43 by 8-30, V44 by 6-32, V46 by 4-45, V47 by 4-39, V48 by 16-28, V49 by 7-36 and V50 by 4-45).

Islington's amendment to "add at the end a further clause, viz' (8) On the Head Office shop front fascia" was carried by 35-12.

Islington's amendment to "add to clause (1) 'and leaflets'" was carried by 32-12.

Resolution 5, as amended, was carried by 32-15.

G. Howlett (Camden) and J. D'Arcy (Camden) moved the following Floor Resolution:

"That a Poll of the Party be held on the question --
the name of the Party be changed from the

Great Britain to that of the Socialist Party".
moved and carried by 29-2 that the vote be taken.
The proposed Floor Resolution was lost by 7-26.

Resolution 6a (Islington):

"This Conference notes the claims of the dictators of the Russian Empire to be democratising their country and allowing freer public debate on matters of importance; in the light of this, this Conference of The Socialist Party of Great Britain resolves to contact the government of the USSR, asking them to provide facilities for The Socialist Party to run public meetings throughout that country expressing our hostility to both private and state capitalism. Copies of this resolution to be sent to the world press".

Proposed amendments:

"Delete 'asking' and replace with 'requiring'; delete 'The Socialist Party' and replace with 'Islington Branch'; delete 'the world press' and replace with 'Punch'" (Enfield and Haringey).

"Delete all after 'resolves to' and replace with 'test this claim in the only practical way, i.e., by offering to pay the expenses of a Party member to travel to any major city in the USSR expressly for the purpose of holding Public Meetings to put the case for socialism. And to prepare in advance to take advantage of the ensuing free publicity'" (Guildford).

B. Coleman (Islington), opening, said that the resolution didn't really have anything to do with Russia, but was about using Conference to make a publicity point. Conference should pass such resolutions and send them to the press as a way of boosting the Party's credibility.

J. Howell (Guildford), on his branch's amendment, said this particular resolution would not be good publicity as it made us seem rather pompous.

J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey), on his branch's amendment, said that the intention of using Conference for publicity purposes was entirely laudable and reasonable. So was the subject matter. The problem was its execution: it was against our principles to appeal to a ruling class to provide us facilities to run public meetings in their country. This made it a daft resolution to which the only response was a satirical amendment.

H. Young (NW London) and A. Waite (non-delegate) discussed whether or not it was possible to carry out socialist propaganda in Russia.

B. Coleman (Islington), winding up, repeated that the intention was to use Conference, for once, for publicity purposes. If people thought Islington had made a bad choice, let them suggest something else. As to the Enfield and Haringey amendment, all branches could play that game and he hoped it wouldn't set a precedent: we shouldn't open the floodgates to satirical amendments.

Guildford's proposed amendment was lost by 7-39.

Enfield and Haringey's proposed amendment was lost by 5-42.

Proposed Resolution 6a was lost by 17-28.

(ix) Resolution 6b (Islington):

"This Conference condemns Channel 4 which, after five years of existence and having given air time to several non-establishment organisations, has consistently failed to allow The Socialist Party a chance to present its views in a programme by or about socialists. This Conference therefore resolves to demand time on the Right to Reply programme where a speaker for The Socialist Party can express the case for allocating TV time to our ideas".

Various branches had submitted a total of six detailed amendments.

C. Slapper (Islington), opening, said that members had been on Channel 4 on a couple of occasions over the past two or three years, but only in a personal capacity. This was another occasion to use Conference positively for publicity purposes.

In the discussion, delegates mentioned other Channel 4 programmes as being suitable also and questioned whether to start by "condemning" a TV station was the best psychological way of eliciting a positive response.

C. Slapper(Islington), winding up, replied that although the word "condemn" appeared in the resolution it need not appear in the letter to Channel 4.

All the proposed amendment were lost(V55 by 4-40, V56 by 18-19, V57 by 11-35, V58 by 16-31, V59 by 6-31, V60 by 9-35).

Resolution 6b, unamended, was carried by 35-12.

(x) Resolution 7a (Enfield and Haringey):

"This Conference resolves that a Committee be set up to ascertain, in outline, the problems likely to be encountered by the World Socialist Movement between obtaining, say, 5% support of the adult population, to its obtaining an overwhelming majority. Such an enquiry should take into account, among other related problems, those of unequal economic, social and political development, cultural and language difference, and those of co-ordinating activities at local, regional and world levels.

The Committee (1) should not be restricted in number by the EC; (2) should remain in being for at least two years; (3) should report to Conferences 1989 and 1990 with its outline of problems, and recommendations intended to: (a) demonstrate the practicability of Socialist activities during this period, (b) to demonstrate, if appropriate, the unsoundness of other political or anarchist theories critical of The Socialist Party's position, and, thereby help to improve the effectiveness of our written and spoken propaganda".

The chair ruled that, as resolution 7a and 7b(see (xi) below) were not really associated, they should be discussed separately.

J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey), opening, said the proposal arose from experience and practical publicity considerations. It was not a question of prediction or prophecy but of being able to answer convincingly questions about what we thought might happen when there was a 5% socialist minority amongst the population. The Party's theory needed refining here for practical propaganda purposes.

J. Howell(Guildford): we should look at the problem that might arise when the Socialist movement had become an even bigger minority of, say, 20%, i.e. a movement of millions of people. Was it imaginable that in these circumstances people would want to wait till socialism was established before doing something practical? Would delegates be prepared to postpone an eye operation to stop their mother going blind until the establishment of socialism or would they ask fellow socialists working in hospitals to carry out the operation on a free, non-paying mutual aid basis? It was considerations like these that had led Guildford to reject the Big Bang scenario...

S. Coleman (Islington) and C. Slapper(Islington) moved that the chair be directed to take the discussion on resolutions 7a and 7b together. Lost 11-14.

D. Donnelly(Glasgow) spoke against setting up the proposed Committee. It was pathetic to discuss how to get from 5% to a majority when we had yet to overcome the problem of how to get from where we were to 5%. In any event, all such a Committee would be able to do was to indulge in science fiction.

R. Cook(Birmingham): there was nothing wrong with science fiction; extrapolation from existing trends was quite legitimate. We must discuss possible future scenarios. We should establish a Committee to go into the matter in as scientific and rational way as possible as we had done a few years ago over the issue of Socialism as a practical alternative.

J. Percy-Smith(Yorks): opposed to the resolution, but not at all to the question being examined and discussed.

V. Vanni(Glasgow) spoke of crystal-gazing.

S. Coleman (Islington): we had a job to do now --build up the number of socialists-- but we could also discuss possible scenarios.

Johnson (Swansea) said he was against the resolution. The Party had never regarded "unequal economic, social and political development" and "cultural and language difference" as problems. Proposed Resolution 7a was lost by 7-40.

Resolution 7b (Islington)

"This Conference rejects the arguments contained in the Guildford Branch circular 'The Road to Socialism', on the grounds that they are theoretically unsound".

Proposed amendment: "Add at the end, 'and this Conference instructs the EC to organise a Special Meeting to fully discuss this circular and the responses to it'" (Yorks).

S. Coleman (Islington), opening, said that if the Guildford circular was accepted this would amount to the most fundamental change in the Party's position since its foundation and it was therefore to be regretted all the more that it had been sent for publication in a non-party publication in America. Guildford claimed that the Party "simply lacks credibility" due to our holding a "cataclysmic" theory of revolution in which wage-labour, the use of money and the exchange of commodities would be abolished in one go. According to them, it was more credible to hold that these would wither or be eroded way within capitalism by the force of socialist will power. This was theoretical idealism. If the Party failed to reject the Guildford circular it would be accepting that capitalism could be invaded by "socialistic" forces and would logically have to set about supporting such schemes within capitalism. Is this what Guildford wanted? Were they in favour of the Party giving financial and political assistance to workers to set up "socialistic" business enterprises within capitalism? Did they think there were such things as "socialistic" reforms? The only alternative Guildford offered to the revolutionary abolition of wage-labour, money and commodity-exchange was to set up cooperatives or communes that would somehow be able to avoid the requirements of profit and the market because they would be being run by conscious socialists. This was economically absurd: coops could not escape from the operation of the economic laws of capitalism. It was the accusation that we hold a Big Bang theory of overnight change without any preparation that was more serious. Of course socialist understanding evolves over a period of time, and of course the socialist movement will engage in alternative publishing schemes, mutual aid arrangements, etc at some stage of its development, but this was not the same as seeing these schemes and these arrangements as a way of transcending capitalism. The idea that a "socialistic" sector could exist within capitalism had to be rejected.

J. Percy-Smith (Yorks), opening on the amendment, said her branch was against the resolution, not because it agreed with the content of the Guildford circular but because they felt there were better ways of handling the problem. Guildford should be given the benefit of the doubt and an opportunity to back down.

P. Lawrence (SW London): to describe the Guildford views as "theoretically unsound" was the understatement of the Conference. In envisaging the establishment of socialism by stages Guildford were expressing a fundamental challenge to the whole basis on which the Party conducts its activities. Contrary to what Guildford suggested, you couldn't have a blending of class monopoly and common ownership, nor a combination of production of commodities and production directly for needs, nor society-wide cooperation within the framework of capital and wage-labour. If someone holding these views applied to join, they would not be admitted to the Party. The same should apply to members who had developed gradualist views within the Party. These were 100% incompatible with membership of the Party and those who held them should resign or be expelled.

E. Cook (Birmingham) said his branch was against the Yorkshire amendment. Such a meeting would only exacerbate things. Guildford were wrong and the Party is clearly against them; they should go away and think again.

R. Best (Lancaster): we don't agree with Guildford but we thought they only wanted to open a debate on the nature of revolution, not to make specific proposals. This is why we are disturbed to learn today that they had published their circular in another journal. Did this mean that they were making specific proposals after all?

J. Howell (Guildford) said that those Guildford members who attended branch meetings were all agreed that a cataclysmic, once-for-all, Big Bang revolution was an impractical proposition. Having come to this conclusion branch members felt that an alternative scenario should be offered, even though not all of them accepted the one outlined. This had proved to have been an unwise decision. As to the publication of the circular in a non-party journal, this had arisen through a member of our American Companion Party showing it to the editor who asked us for permission to publish it, which we gave.

R. Graham (Bristol): in wanting to reject "the arguments" contained in the Guildford circular the Islington resolution was a blunt instrument as this meant rejecting all the arguments in it. But might not some of these be valid? Guildford had not just started a wild goose chase over cooperatives, but had also raised other issues, worth discussing, such as how to link the long-term and short-term interests of workers.

E. Walters (Islington) said that Guildford had misinterpreted the Marx-Engels theory of revolution inherited by the Party. Some changes could and did take place overnight, such as precisely the "Big Bang" change in the City. This was first discussed, then agreed, then prepared and the change did take place, literally, overnight. As did the abolition of the GIC. The socialist revolution would be like these changes; it was this theory of revolution which marked us off from all others that Guildford were asking us to abandon.

B. Johnson (Swansea): The Guildford circular was unsound on economics, but it did make some valid points in other fields. For instance, we ought to set up our own Research Department and Educational Institute at some stage.

V. Vanni (Glasgow) said he was struck by the sheer utopianism of the Guildford circular and the total impracticability of their proposals: coops already existed today but it was the institution of private property that prevented them from functioning other than as capitalist enterprises. Guildford had been provocative in so evidently rejecting the basis of the Party's case. The so-called Big Bang theory was a complete non-issue. The Party had always seen socialism as developing within the womb of capitalism in the sense that we have always said that capitalism makes socialism possible by developing the productive forces and socialising labour. As to what would happen in the future that was too far away for us to deal with now.

J. Howell (Guildford): the Guildford circular on "The Road to Socialism" contained two distinct parts: a critique of the Big Bang theory and a suggested outline of an alternative scenario for the coming of socialism involving coops and other mutualist institutions. The branch now recognised that it had made an error of judgement in including the second part. They hadn't realised that this would attract more attention than the first part and were now sorry that it had gone in, but they still said it was utopian to posit a sudden, all-or-nothing method of establishing socialism. In any event, the circular was never meant to be a take-it-or-leave-it document; the branch were not trying to force anything on the Party.

Yorkshire's proposed amendment was lost by 14-33.

Resolution 7b was carried by 38-8.

SUNDAY, 3 APRIL

The Socialist Party of New Zealand sent fraternal greetings. The chair welcomed the presence of comrade A.H. from South Africa.

R. Best (Lancaster) and R. Bennett (Manchester) moved the following Floor Resolutions:

"This Conference regrets that the Guildford Branch have

permission to a journal to print in their name views that are in opposition to the Party's current position".

J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey) and P. Hart (SW London) moved an amendment to delete "current".

J. Bennett (Manchester): if an individual member had done what Guildford had, this would have been condemned; Conference must show its disapproval of Guildford's action.

J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey): the Party's position to which Guildford had expressed opposition was not just its "current" position, i.e. one that was capable of varying from year to year, but one of its fundamental tenets.

G. Marcelo (Bristol) read from the introduction the editor of the Grand Rapids (USA) Discussion Bulletin had given to the Guildford circular: "The branch, which sent the DB a copy, emphasized that this is a proposal for consideration, not the official position of the SPGB". In an editorial he had written of it as a proposal "to make what amounts to an about face in the SPGB program", adding that "the SPGB apparently handles what might be considered heretics in a much more rational manner than some parties I can think of". This floor resolution risked proving him wrong. We must always allow an atmosphere of discussion in the Party. In any event, there was no such thing as an internal Party document since all our proceedings were open and public.

S. Coleman (Islington): what Guildford had done had set a bad precedent. Readers of the journal in question had been able to read the Guildford circular before our own Conference had been able to discuss it.

K. Graham (Bristol) replied that the dangerous precedent was, on the contrary, condemning a branch for having communicated a view which, however contentious, had not been rejected by the Party at the time.

R. Cook (Birmingham) denied that Guildford had expressed a view that had not been rejected by the Party. How could the Party not be regarded as rejecting a criticism of its basic position? What they had done was bad-mannered even if there was no sanction for this.

J. Percy-Smith (Yorks) said we must not stifle discussion, but wondered whether Guildford might not have infringed Rule 10 about branches not publishing political literature that had not been approved by the Party.

L. Lawrence (SW London) wondered if Rule 5 about members not writing or speaking for another political party except in opposition might not have been infringed as well.

A. Buick (Assistant General Secretary): the Discussion Bulletin was merely what its name implied and not the journal of a political group. Its editor, an ex-member of the SLP, published contributions unchanged in the form in which they were submitted. Other members had used this forum previously to put over the Party case and had been embarrassed to see the publication of the Guildford circular undermine their efforts.

D. Donnelly (Glasgow): luckily the circular had been sent to a journal whose editor was relatively sympathetic to us, but what if it had fallen into the hands of one hostile to us? A balance had to be struck between freedom of internal discussion and the communication of documents to outsiders for publication. In his opinion, Guildford had been wrong to say yes to publication and Conference should regret that they had done so.

J. Howell (Guildford): there was no such thing as a private Party discussion. All our discussions, whether written or spoken, were public. Guildford had not act wrongly, as no limits on the communication of discussion documents had been laid down.

V. Vanni (Glasgow): there was a dividing line between internal discussion and outside propaganda. While we allowed members to express critical views in front of outsiders attending an EC meeting or Conference, would we allow those members to distribute their views in written form to passers-by in the street?

A. Krause(Camden): there manifestly was a difference between the spoken and the written word. We had been lucky this time in that the editor's comment had let us out of an embarrassing situation. R. Best (Lancaster), winding up, said that if the resolution wasn't carried this would mean that Conference accepted what Guildford had done. The resolution was relatively moderate in tone as it merely regretted, rather than condemned, Guildford's action. The amendment to delete "current" was carried by 14-4.
The Floor Resolution, as so amended, was carried by 20-3.

6. EC's REPORT FOR 1987 INCLUDING REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND SUB-COMMITTEES

Conference discussed those parts of the above Report that had not already arisen in connexion with discussion of the Instructed Resolutions.

In connexion with the Treasurer's report, H. Cottis(E. London) presented his branch's Item for Discussion on "The present financial position of the Party --the need for an immediate increase in Party dues and for an increase in the price of the Socialist Standard".

D. Donnelly (Glasgow): it was evident that dues would have to go up, unless, that is, we decided to abolish them, as the SPNZ had done, leaving it to members to pay an annual subscription of an amount they felt they could afford.

R. Cook (Birmingham): the new Treasurer, when he or she was found, should urge members to pay their dues by standing order, then the onus would be on members to stop paying rather than on the Party to collect them.

A. Buick (Assistant General Secretary) pointed out that at present members paid dues to branches not directly to Head Office, so that what comrade Cook proposed, sensible as it was, would require a change of rules.

P. Wilson (outgoing Treasurer) pointed out that even if dues were collected in full -- £6000 a year as against the £3500 actually received-- the extra £2500 would not solve the Party's financial problems as the annual deficit of expenditure over receipts other than legacies was of the order of £12,000.

S. Coleman (Islington) and P. Lawrence (SW London) moved the following Floor Resolution:

"This Conference recommends the EC to call on each branch to pay an amount of money quarterly, determined by the number of members in each branch, as a means of helping to diminish the seriously large financial deficit of the Party".

E. Goodman(W London): such a levy would not increase the amount of money returned to Head Office as it would be paid at the expense of more outstanding dues and literature bills.

V. Vanni (Glasgow): you can't get blood out of a stone; the only solution was an Instructed Resolution at next year's Conference to raise dues.

L. Cox (EC Member) advocated abolishing dues in favour of a voluntary annual contribution.

The Floor Resolution was lost by 3-21

H. Moss(Swansea) and R. Edwards(Yorks) moved that the EC Report for 1987 be adopted. Carried unanimously.

7. REPORTS OF BRANCHES TO CONFERENCE

The various branches reported, or amplified on their written reports, on their activities in 1987. Activities were continuing at the same level as in the previous year.

8. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Conference went on to deal with those Items for Discussion not already discussed in connexion with the instructed resolutions.

(i) Should we have an 'In-Party' magazine?(Islington)

C. Slapper (Islington), presenting this item, said that some Islington members felt there should be such a magazine that would

cover Party news rather than be a forum for controversy.

R. Cook (Birmingham) said that such items of Party news could, and should, appear in the Socialist Standard.

H. Young (NW London) said a Party news bulletin was OK, but a revival of Forum was to be avoided at all costs.

G. Marcelo (Bristol) said his branch was in favour of the widest possible internal discussion.

(i) The lessons to be learned by this Party from the success of the WSP(I)'s journal, Socialist View. (Glasgow)

(ii) Should the SS have more short and easily digestible articles? (Islington)

The chair asked R. Critchfield to report on the Workshop on the Socialist Standard that had taken place earlier that afternoon. R. Critchfield reported that most of those who had taken part in the discussion did favour shorter, easier-to-digest articles but also a change in the method of distribution. Some were in favour of taking the SS "down market" to make it a street publication like SV written to cater for that target. Others felt that the SS should leave this to the SV and aim at another audience, to be reached by commercial distribution.

V. Vanni (Glasgow), presenting his branch's item, said that with a circulation of 1000 the SV was immensely successful compared with the SS once the differing membership of our two parties was taken into account; Glasgow members swore by it.

R. Best (Lancaster) and A. Jackson (Lancaster) moved the following Floor Resolution:

"This Conference recommends that the price of the SS be raised to 50p".

R. Best (Lancaster): since experience had shown that price was not a factor in getting people to buy the Standard, it could be increased without the risk of reducing sales.

H. Moss (Swansea) said that, for sales psychology reasons, he would have preferred an increase to a price just under 50p, say, to 45p.

V. Vanni (Glasgow) pleaded against pricing the Standard out of the market. An increase to 50p would halve Glasgow's sales. People North of Watford couldn't afford such an increase.

P. Hope (General Secretary) pointed out that the EC, which had the power to do so subject to confirmation by Conference or ADM, had decided to increase the price to 40p as from June 1988.

C. Slapper (Islington) said his branch was split 50/50 on whether the price of the Standard should be increased. If there were financial difficulties, might it not be preferable to reduce the number of pages from 20 to 16 or to reduce slightly the printing quality?

J. Percy-Smith (Yorks): if the choice was between a price increase and a reduction in pages, she would favour the former without hesitation.

I. Hart (SW London) and R. Edwards (Yorks) moved an amendment to the Floor Resolution: "delete 50p and substitute 40p".

I. Hart (SW London) said her branch was in favour of a price increase, and it must be assumed that the EC had decided on the figure of 40p on the basis of informed figures.

E. Grant (EC Member): there had been no change in the price of the SS for the last 5 years. With inflation, to maintain the price at 30p would be to reduce the price of the Standard when printing costs had gone up. Was this sensible?

The amendment was carried by 21-6.

The Floor Resolution, so amended, was carried by 20-5.

- (iv) The value of changing Conference voting method (the Hammersmith Branch proposed whereby the actual number of votes cast for and against at the Branch would be recorded at Conference) with reference to the Party Poll on this question. (Glasgow)
The Party Poll having decided the matter, this item was not discussed.
- (v) What does the Party mean by democratic control in Socialism? (SW London)

P. Lawrence (SW London), presenting this Item, said that we stated that decisions in socialism would be majority decisions, but this raised the question of what to do with individuals who didn't abide by such decisions. Some members said there would be no anti-social behaviour in socialism, but that was absurd. Violent and sexual crimes would only disappear if a direct link was assumed to exist between economic relations and psychology so that the psychology of all individuals would change when their economic position did. This was crude economic determinism and a relic of utopianism in the Party; it was dreaming of a future perfect society. It also expressed a strain of anarchist thought, opposed to any restraint, that existed in the Party. A particularly bad example of this was to be found on page 46 of the Party pamphlet From Capitalism to Socialism where there was reference to the abolition of "coercive powers and agencies such as the armed forces, police, courts and jails". This was to suggest that there would be no coercive means of any kind, no public power of coercion, no law, in socialism. It was to suggest that there would be no social restraints and that anyone could do what they liked. This went against democratic control and was fantastic rubbish that marginalised us. Such marginalisation could be avoided by us clearly stating that there would be social constraints against anti-social behaviour and that this would involve some institution-alised means of coercion. This was prefigured in the Declaration of Principles, which spoke of the adaptation of the machinery of government to the needs of the socialist community.

E. Goodman (W London) said she was disturbed by what she had just heard. Comrade Lawrence appeared to be equating "coercion" and "restraint". She, for one, couldn't envisage prisons, police and armed forces existing in socialism. Members no longer said that there would be no anti-social behaviour in socialism --some forms of mental illness would continue-- but this was quite different from saying that we would retain the machinery used today to deal with such matters. There were other means such as medical help and social ostracism.

H. Young (NW London) said his branch was also concerned about anarchist tendencies in the Party and was preparing a circular on the question of socialism versus anarchism. There would be authority in socialism. Even under socialism the captain of a ship or the driver of a train or the pilot of a plane would be in charge. People would have to work regular hours and do objectionable jobs. Personal problems would remain leading sometimes to anti-social acts. The Bolsheviks had had the right idea, though they later abandoned it, when they had advocated, in the early days of their rule in Russia, that the courts would be gradually transformed into organs for the expression of public disapproval.

S. Coleman (Islington): some of the recent writings in the Party did indeed employ a libertarian vocabulary, but there was a reason for this; it was a reaction against the sort of statist views that had been expressed by the previous speaker. Only a few years ago, some members had argued that there would be a declining State existing within socialism and the Party had had to repudiate this idea as false. What we meant by democratic control in socialism could be seen from what we meant by it within the Party. There was delegation, accountability and dissent but dissent only to the point where it did not disrupt the implementation of the will of the majority. There were sanctions ranging from disapproval to expulsion. In a socialist society there was going to be a need for mechanisms not only for people to make decisions but also for ensuring adhesion to them whatever the reason why some individuals did not do so (such as ignorance or incapacity). But if there were sanctions there would have to be a system of appeal. Anthropologists might call such a system for deciding on and appealing against sanctions "law". It was a question of vocabulary here but the terms "socialist law" and "socialist courts" were unacceptable. We should speak rather of customs,

regulations and democratic control. This was not anarchism as anarchism did not entail sanctions and appeals against sanctions.

J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey) said there was no problem here if the Party case was put accurately. With regard to anti-social behaviour, the key concepts were isolate, restrain and contain. With regard to authority, there was often a confusion between political power and certification of competence. This latter --who can fly planes, be surgeons, etc-- had not yet been systematised in the Party, but in socialism there would clearly be criteria such as experience, knowledge, competence, aptitude and skills for deciding who would be allowed to do certain things.

L. Cox (EC Member): in this field the terminology was as important as the ideas. Members should not speak of "institutionalised coercion" when they should be speaking of "socialized disapprobation".

A. Atkinson (non-delegate) said that the example of the ship's captain, introduced by Engels, dated from the time of sailing ships. It had been out of date for years. Today a ship's captain was not the sole authority on board but was aided in his work by a whole array of computers and other machines.

C. Skelton (non-delegate): we should distinguish between "authority" and "authoritarianism". We can accept social authority without accepting authoritarianism and we can talk about social norms, customs, disapproval but in talking about social coercion and coercive institutions in socialism comrade Lawrence had gone a little too far. There would be social order in socialism, but not coercion and compulsion.

F. Simpkins (SW London), replying to the debate, said he couldn't see the problem with talking about coercion and authority with respect to socialism. If socialist society needed these, then we would have to have them and if coercion and restraint were necessary they would have to be institutionalised. If people engaged in anti-social acts they would need to be restrained. What was worse: the anti-social acts or the means of restraining them? To talk of no coercion, no restraint, no police sounded nice, but was it practicable?

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The total collection over the three days amounted to £154.05 (£50.32 on 1 April, £53.62 on 2 April and £50.11 on 3 April). Votes of thanks were moved and carried to the Canteen Committee, the Town Hall's caretaker, the Standing Orders Committee and in particular comrade Les Cox who was giving up the job, to comrade Ralph Critchfield on his leaving the SSFC after many years, and to comrade Pat Wilson for his competent and amiable chairing of the Conference.